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## Robert A. Kennedy Speech for Graduate School of Biomedical Science Event

Robert A. Kennedy  
*University of Maine*

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# Office of the President

## Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences Event

Sept. 7, 2006

**Robert A. Kennedy, President, University of Maine**

Welcome to Buchanan Alumni House and the University of Maine—I truly appreciate your presence here today.

This fall we welcomed another large and accomplished incoming class, which includes the largest number of Maine High School graduates ever to study on this campus.

But perhaps the biggest milestone in this year's great enrollment news is the launching of UMaine's Graduate School of Biomedical Science with its first class of students.

The Graduate School of Biomedical Science—or GSBS as we refer to it—can be traced back to Governor Baldacci's State of the State Address in 2005 when he announced its creation as part of a research triangle supported by his budget and bond proposals (and I quote) to "create jobs and improve public health, create research and development capacity, and develop our health care workforce..."

GSBS is truly unique in Maine, as it brings together many of the state's strongest research institutions, creating an experienced and talented pool of scientists and leaders who will continue to work hard to make GSBS a great success.

With great appreciation, I want to recognize our partners in creating the Graduate School of Biomedical Science – people who deserve much credit for getting us to this point:

- Barbara Knowles—who is with us—and Rick Woychik from The Jackson.
- Patricia Hand—again who is here—along with John Forrest from Mt. Desert Island Biological Lab.
- The Maine Medical Center Research Institute—President and CEO Vince Conti (Bob Friesel).
- Eastern Maine Healthcare System and Maine Institute for Human Genetics and Health—Michelle Hood/Larry Beauregard.
- The University of Southern Maine—President Rich Pattenau (Margo Wood).
- The University of New England—President Danielle Ripich (Boyd Buser).

I would also like to recognize Chancellor Terry MacTaggart, a strong advocate for GSBS, and a leader whose vision is so important to helping advance the University of Maine System.

It's the outstanding first year GSBS students, however – each of whom is working toward a University of Maine Ph.D – that are certainly our focus today.

Their talents are extraordinary; they have the intelligence, academic backgrounds and necessary determination to achieve their lofty goals. I'm confident that each new GSBS student will contribute significantly to current and ongoing research in our institutions; I am equally confident that each of these new students will make an impact in the biomedical research and education field in the years ahead—exactly what we hoped for with the establishment of GSBS.

You can recognize the GSBS students by their white name tags. Maybe each of you could raise your hands for a moment, so that we can acknowledge you?

Just a little detail on the group as a whole – and I hope all of our guests will stay with us a little later to meet our new students and learn more about their research.

There are 12 students in this incoming class, and that is the number of students we wanted to enroll this fall to get the GSBS started.

Nine of the 12 have real Maine roots, and they are here – back here in some cases – to participate in this program. These are the brightest of the bright, and they are connected to Maine in a real way. It is our hope that they will stay here after finishing their studies, to live and to work, and to contribute to our statewide community in important ways.

Two of the new students are from China and we are delighted to have them as part of our community. They are bringing important perspectives and interesting academic and social backgrounds to the GSBS—they enrich this first year's class greatly.

All in all, this is a wonderful group, and we warmly welcome each and every one of them.

GSBS is a great example of the kind of program the new model land-grant university—as I've referred to UMaine—should provide. We have partnered with six great Maine institutions, pooling resources and sharing expertise, to develop a collaborative program that can serve our state and our students far more effectively than any institution could do alone.

By combining our intellectual resources, we have a faculty of more than 80 researchers. That makes this one of the largest graduate programs of its kind anywhere, and gives us the critical mass necessary to develop great new scientists and to advance the frontiers of modern science.

This science – aimed at improving human health – is particularly important in Maine, where we have our share of significant health concerns. The potential for a measurable impact is real, and all of us involved find that prospect very exciting.

There is also a potential economic benefit. We envision the development—built upon a foundation of educated, trained and motivated professionals from the GSBS—of biomedical, research-related businesses right here in Maine. These would be exactly the kind of businesses that leaders like Gov. Baldacci have been telling us will make a real difference, both to our economy and to our society.

We would not be here today without Gov. Baldacci's support for this

project.

- From the time he first heard about GSBS, the governor recognized its value and potential impact—he worked hard to develop the public and legislative support we needed to move from idea to reality, and he spearheaded the efforts to assure the initial funding to begin GSBS.

- In his 2005 State of the State Address, Governor Baldacci said "Our new biomedical research triangle will...create a collaborative approach to research statewide"—something never done before.

- I believe that the Graduate School of Biomedical Science has in fact done that.

- We at UMaine, our partner institutions, our first GSBS class, and future GSBS students all owe the governor our gratitude.

Please welcome a UMaine graduate that we are tremendously proud of – Gov. John Baldacci.

Thank you, Gov. Baldacci. Your support for GSBS, and for the University of Maine in general, is important to us and it is much appreciated.

Programs like this do not happen without strong leadership from within the academic community, and many of UMaine's faculty members, along with colleagues at our partner institutions, have accepted the challenge of developing GSBS and forming it as a viable academic entity.

It is now my pleasure to introduce one of those leaders, UMaine Prof. Keith Hutchison. Keith is a biochemist, and he is the director of GSBS. The 2001 winner of UMaine's Distinguished Maine Professor Award, Keith is truly one of our esteemed faculty members, and a great role model for highly motivated students like those in GSBS.

To share a few thoughts from the faculty perspective, Professor Keith Hutchison.

Thank you, Keith.

And thanks to all of you for joining us today.

If any of the reporters who are with us have questions, we'll be available to speak with you.

For the rest of our guests, I hope you will have the opportunity to visit the poster displays outside, and to meet the GSBS students.

I'm sure you'll find them to be impressive and inspiring, and we all look forward to following their progress as they continue to work toward their degrees—I'm confident that the good news about the Graduate School of Biomedical Science and what it means to the state and to science is just beginning!

Thank you.

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